

others strengthened their laws and significantly expanded their programs. In California, for example, the state legislature broadly supported a move to raise the state cap on charters from 100 to 250 of this year and allow the creation of 100 additional schools each succeeding year. And just last month in Texas, the state board of education approved the creation of 85 new schools, more than doubling the existing number.

This is truly a grass-roots revolution, led by parents and teachers and community activists, which is seeking to reinvent the public school and take it back to the future, reconnecting public education to some of our oldest, most basic values—ingenuity, responsibility, accountability—and refocusing its mission on doing what's best for the child instead of what's best for the system.

The results so far have been quite encouraging. Parents of charter school students overwhelmingly give their programs high marks, particularly for their responsiveness and the sense of community they foster. Also, broad-based studies done by the Hudson Institute and the Education Department show that charters are effectively serving diverse populations, especially many of the disadvantaged and at-risk children that traditional public schools have struggled to educate. And while it's too soon to determine what impact charter schools are having on overall academic performance, the early returns suggest that charters are succeeding where it matters most, in the classroom.

A survey done last fall by the National School Boards Association found that the charter movement is already having a positive ripple effect that is being felt in many local public school districts. The NSBA report cites evidence that traditional public schools are working harder to please local families so they won't abandon them to competing charter schools, and that central administrators often see charters as a "a powerful tool" to develop new ideas and programs without fearing regulatory roadblocks.

The most remarkable aspect of the charter movement may be that it has managed to bring together citizens, educators, business leaders and politicians from across the political spectrum in support of a mutual goal to better educate our children through more choice, more flexibility and more accountability in our public schools. In these grass-roots, as I suggested above, may lie the roots of a consensus for renewing the promise of public education and ending the left-right stalemate that has too often impeded the reform debate.

We want to build on that broad agreement at the local and state level and do what we can at the Federal level to support and encourage the growth of this movement, which is just what the legislation we approved today will do. It starts by revamping the charter grant program to focus it more

on helping states and local groups create new schools and meet the President's goal of creating 3,000 charters by the year 2000.

Specifically, it calls for gradually increasing the grant funding over the next several years, and then better targeting those additional dollars to the states that are serious about expanding their charter program. It would do so by establishing several "priority" criteria that would give preference in awarding start-up grants to those states that show real progress in creating high-quality, highly-accountable charters. Our hope is that these changes will give states that have been slow to embrace the charter movement an incentive to get on board. The intent is not to punish those states that are moving cautiously, but instead to reward the ones that are prepared to harness this progressive force for change and encourage others to do the same.

The CSEA would also tighten some unintended loopholes in the original statute that have hampered the effectiveness of the program, ensure that charter schools receive their fair share of funding from the major Federal categorical grant programs, and take some initial steps to widen the pool of funding sources for those charters that are struggling to stay alive. And to enhance the potential for all children to benefit from charter successes, this legislation directs the Secretary of Education to work with the states to in effect establish an "innovation pipeline" that would share information about what is working in charter schools to public school districts around the country.

That, in the end, is really what this bill and the charter school movement in general are all about, which is improving the whole of our public education system. As Norman Atkin, a founder and director of the North Star Academy Charter School in Newark, has said, charter schools have the potential to serve as the "R&D arm" of public education, incubating new ideas that could benefit millions of students. And in time hopefully every public school will put into practice the principles undergirding the charter model, and every public school will be liberated from some of the top-heavy bureaucracy that too often suffocates them and in turn pledge to meet high standards of achievement for which they will be held strictly accountable, and every public school will benefit from the positive forces of choice and competition.

For now, we have taken an important step toward that goal today, and passed a piece of legislation that I am confident will make a real and immediate difference in the lives of many children in this country. I again want to thank my colleagues for their broad vote of confidence in the charter movement, and I look forward to working with them next year on new blueprint for education reform that will incor-

porate the substance and spirit of what we have achieved today.●

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION CONTINUING GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives from the House the House joint resolution that will continue Government funding until midnight Monday, October 12, 1998, with no amendments, it be considered agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT BY THE VICE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, in accordance with 22 U.S.C. 1928a-1928d, as amended, appoints the following Senators as members of the Senate Delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly during the Second Session of the 105th Congress, to be held in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, November 9-14, 1998:

The Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH);
The Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER);

The Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER);

The Senator from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON);

The Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS);

The Senator from Oregon (Mr. SMITH);

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. THOMPSON);

The Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BUMPERS);

The Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI); and

The Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA).

EXPRESSING SENSE OF SENATE ON COMPLETION OF CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 296 submitted earlier today by Senator KERREY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 296) expressing the sense of the Senate that, on completion of construction of a World War II Memorial in Area 1 of the District of Columbia and its environs, Congress should provide funding for the maintenance, security, and custodial and long-term care of the memorial by the National Park Service.